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SUBJECT: MACEDONIA:GUARANTORS OF FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT
DELIVER ASSESSMENT OF ITS IMPLEMENTATION TO PM GRUEVSKI

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On the 8th Anniversary of the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) the principal officers of the four international entities that signed the OFA presented an assessment of its implementation to date to Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski. The Principals cited education, decentralization, equitable ethnic representation, non-discrimination, and use of minority languages as areas for further implementation. The PM was accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister for Implementation of the OFA Abdylaqim Ademi and Deputy Prime Minister for EU Integration Vasko Naumovski in the meeting. All three were receptive to the review and admitted that additional efforts were necessary in the areas highlighted by the four Principals.(End Summary)

OFA Review

¶2. (SBU) In mid-June 2009, Ambassador Reeker, EU Special Representative Fouere, OSCE Spillover Mission HOM Ambassador Herrero and NATO HOM Commodore Gagashev-- who meet regularly as the Principal officers of the four international entities who signed the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA)-- decided to conduct a combined, informal evaluation of the OFA's implementation to date. Following the evaluation the four Principals agreed to jointly present their findings and recommendations to Prime Minister Gruevski. (Background- The OFA established a legal framework for improving interethnic relations in Macedonia in order to stabilize the country following the 2001 armed conflict between the ethnic Albanian National Liberation Army and the Macedonian government.)

Five Areas for Improvement

¶3. (SBU) The evaluation revealed five areas where shortcomings still exist in implementation of the OFA: disparities in the education system, decentralization of the Government, equitable representation of ethnic minorities in the public sector, non-discrimination policies, and the use of minority languages. The Principals agreed to divvy up the five areas and prepare detailed evaluations and recommendations within their missions to present to the PM. On August 13, the 8th Anniversary of the signing of the OFA, the Principals met with the PM, DPM for OFA Implementation Ademi and new DPM for EU Integration Naumovski to present the results.

Integration of Education

14. (SBU) The OSCE encouraged the PM to promote increased ethnic integration of the education system, noting a recent trend in the opposite direction at interethnic schools where problems and fights have occurred. OSCE Ambassador Herrero pointed to a four-year strategy for integrating education recently developed by the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities as a means for advancing this goal. The Prime Minister and DPM Ademi both agreed that education should be used as a tool for integration and the recent trend of segregating schools in interethnic communities was detrimental to the end goal of improving interethnic relations in Macedonia. DPM Ademi noted that the Ministry of Education was in the process of drafting its five-year action plan and said it should include strategies to increase positive multiethnic student interaction.

Decentralization of Government

15. (SBU) Citing significant under-funding of municipal governments and enormous disparities in funding among municipalities, Ambassador Reeker explained that decentralization of government finances was crucial to the OFA because it enabled local governments to more adequately fulfill their financial responsibilities and meet the needs of their citizens. He also encouraged the PM to resolve ongoing issues with state versus municipal ownership of public lands, which has stifled development and investment in many municipalities. The PM agreed that municipal funding was inadequate and said he had met with his Minister of Finance to discuss ways to increase municipal revenues. He also noted that the Ministry of Transportation, with USAID support, was drafting legislation that would better regulate the use of state land by municipalities. Additionally, he emphasized that personnel who managed state construction land should be properly trained in construction land management to ensure the land is developed legally and efficiently.

Equitable Representation

16. (SBU) The EUSR pointed out that it was extremely difficult to make any sort of accurate assessment on levels of equitable representation of minority ethnic groups in the public sector due to a lack of accurate statistics. The EUSR encouraged the PM and DPM Ademi to create a single, transparent and reliable system for collecting not just ethnic employment statistics but overall public sector employment figures as well, which at times are completely unavailable or unreliable when they exist. The EUSR also emphasized the importance of merit based, non-politicized recruitment of ethnic minorities for public sector jobs and pointed out that smaller ethnic minorities, such as the Turks and the Roma, are often overlooked in ethnic minority recruitment. DPM Ademi acknowledged that data collection was a particular challenge for his office and agreed with the need for a unified data collection database. The PM suggested the establishment of a special commission, which would include the Ministry of Finance, to quantify the exact number of public employees. DPM Ademi also noted that one of his office's primary goals was to increase the ethnic representation of smaller minority groups.

Non-Discrimination

17. (SBU) The Principals praised Macedonia for its achievements in non-discrimination, specifically noting the establishment of the Ombudsman's Office to protect human rights. However, they pointed out that the country still lacked a clear and consistent anti-discrimination law and urged the Government to amend the Criminal Code to include hate crime provisions. They also encouraged the Government to continue efforts to strengthen the role of the Ombudsman. The PM concurred that an anti-discrimination law was needed

and claimed the Government intended to complete a draft law by August 30. He also said he would welcome any suggestions from the international community on how to strengthen the Ombudsman's office.

Use of Minority Languages

18. (SBU) The Principals acknowledged that a significant step was taken with the adoption of the law on the use of minority languages last year, but noted that data on implementation of the law was limited and ethnic minority populations widely perceived implementation as lacking. They also noted that the debate on the use of minority languages had recently risen to the fore again in Parliament. Additionally, the Principals pointed out that to some extent, use of language is a matter of perception and the Government could greatly improve public perception by making small gestures, such as government officials using minority languages in portions of addresses to minority groups. The PM agreed that the government should create a matrix for assessing the level of implementation of the law on language, especially in municipalities where a non-majority ethnicity comprised at least twenty percent of the population. The PM and DPM Ademi asserted that they had made efforts to alleviate some of the debate surrounding the use of the Albanian language in Parliament but found it challenging to find enough qualified interpreters and translators to satisfy the needs of the Parliament and needed to improve training for the interpreters already working in Parliament.

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